

VEC, VE, MRAC, and other abbreviations

MRAC is the Milwaukee Radio Amateurs' Club Inc. While we do have a repeater (147.045 +600) we are not MRC (146.91), MAARS (145.13), or anyone else. Those are all fine groups, and so are we. So, just who are we? MRAC is one of a handful of the oldest continuously active radio clubs in the world. We were founded in 1917. We became affiliated with ARRL in 1919. We continued to meet during both world wars, when other clubs suspended operation. We meet regularly. Over the years that has meant anything from weekly to monthly. We currently meet the last Thursday of each month (except December, when we have a Christmas Dinner Party). Most meetings have brief club business and feature a program dealing with some aspect of amateur radio, electronics or technology.

MRAC is not a "repeater" club. That means the repeater we do own is not our primary focus. We are often called a general-purpose radio club. If anything our focus is on education and training. During much of our history we have conducted classes in all grades of amateur radio licenses. Recently we completed 20 continuous years of classes with over 500 people attending. After a break of a few years, we are returning to conducting classes. Would you like to help teach a class? Or maybe you are interested in taking a class? Would you like to get involved in on-the-air code classes? Just contact the club at the listed phone number or email.

Since the early eighties, the FCC has authorized the use of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (VEC). A VEC is certified by the FCC to administer amateur radio examinations. There are currently only 14 VEC in the entire country. ARRL is one, so is W5YI. MRAC is one too. MRAC is the only VEC in Wisconsin. Or in Illinois, Minnesota, Michigan. A VEC is fully responsible for license testing. The VEC prepares the tests, certifies individual volunteer examiners (VE), receives and accounts for the test fees, receives tests from a VE and submits the results electronically to the FCC, handles reimbursements for expenses by a VE, and archives the completed paperwork for all exams taken. A VE does not prepare a test, nor do they submit the results directly to the FCC.

MRAC also functions as our own VE in the Milwaukee area. We give tests monthly (except summers) and at occasional hamfests. If you have an Extra class license, would you be interested in working as a VE with us? Do you have an Extra class license and would like to be part of a group giving tests (possibly on another day or at another location) working through MRAC VEC? If so just contact John Kraak KF9XL at the club phone or email.

MRAC does not produce a hamfest. We have on occasion sponsored a portion of a regional convention and in fact sponsored the 1947 ARRL National Convention. Why don't we have a hamfest? They are a lot of work, and there are probably too many currently in existence. We do have a yearly auction (at our May meeting) where you can get good deals, clean out the house of some stuff and the club makes a little money besides. For the truly small stuff (or the truly old stuff) we have raffles at most club meetings. This is equipment, parts, whatever which people no longer want and don't want to go through the hassle of trying to sell it themselves (or the item has limited value) so they donate it to the club. We sell tickets for 50 cents and at the end of the meeting, we call numbers and when selected you get to pick from the collection of stuff. Occasionally a person has an item of some value, which they donate to the club. We then auction the item to the highest bidder. We also distribute radio and electronics and computer books and magazines which people no longer want (free of charge).

MRAC participates in Field Day every year. Field Day is an annual contest (the 4th weekend of June) where groups of operators set up radios and antennas away from a fixed location and spend 24 hours trying to contact other similar groups (primarily North America but can be worldwide). The club owns it's own radios and antennas (but anyone is also welcome to bring along any of their own equipment). This offers an opportunity for someone with a Technician license (or no license) or no HF equipment, to operate on the HF bands under the guidance of someone more experienced (that is another way of saying we do not just go out for total points, but for the fun of the weekend).

There you have it. The brief story of the Milwaukee Radio Amateurs' Club. Sound interesting? Why not check us out.

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